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ABSTRACT

This report analyzes the continued underrepresentation of women in educational administration. It emphasizes that schools are places where diverse groups come together to learn and administrators are responsible for protecting the rights and freedoms of all groups within the school. The paper describes the state of gender equity in the United States and the ongoing discrimination that still exists. It discusses the positive effects wrought by Title X. It discusses the connection between self-image and the availability of, or lack of, gender-specific role models in the schools, where the teaching staff is predominantly female and the administration is predominantly male. Studies have shown that females typically have lower self-esteem than boys as a result of subtle cultural messages. Those women who do enter educational administration are typically better educated than their male counterparts, with women administrators being almost twice as likely as male administrators to have earned a doctorate. The article discusses the barriers women face in their efforts to move into educational administration and explores how a female's socialization to work differs from that of a man. The report closes by stating that when women are given an opportunity, schools benefit. (Contains 23 references.) (RJM)

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Ethics and Gender Diversity in School Management: Viewpoint

By Carolyn McCreight

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Ethics and Gender Diversity in School Management: Viewpoint

The word, diversity means differences in race, ethnicity, gender, and/or socioeconomic status. All of us belong to one or more of these groups at the same time and many of our beliefs and actions occur as a result of these memberships. The fact that someone can identify with more than one group and feel empathy makes Americans seem complex and even inconsistent at times (Timm, 1994).

Strike, Haller, and Saltis (1998) in a study of ethics and school administration found that ninety percent of Americans are tolerant of societal differences. What people share could be more important than how they differ and as educational leaders, we must be wise enough to make sound ethical choices for all.

Schools are places where diverse groups come together to learn what it takes to fit into the larger society. Administrators for schools are responsible for protecting the rights and freedoms of all groups within the school personnel, student body, parents, and community. The leadership challenge in decision making is often not about deciding between a right and a wrong choice, but deciding between two right choices (Kidder, 1996).

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Gender Equity

America, as a land of opportunity, strongly encourages the principles of equal rights and equal opportunity, regardless of race, sex, or creed. Though Americans have espoused the doctrine of equal rights for all, many people continue to suffer the discouraging reality of discrimination. Educational leaders must be aware that discrimination still exists and society depends on leaders to make gender-neutral judgments for fairness and equity.

In fostering equal rights and opportunity for on group, do we compromise the rights of another group? Do we give females a "leg up" and at the same time discriminate against males? Whether it is right to foster the cause of the downtrodden or allow them to do the best they can without help is an ethical question.

Congress passed Title IX, a landmark civil rights law. The 1972 law prohibited sex discrimination against all students and employees in federally assisted education programs and included most public and private schools. The implementation of Title IX caused the development of policy, programs, and materials to ensure equal rights for boys and girls (Ornstein, 1994). Twenty-seven years after its passage, Title IX has impacted all aspects of schooling, achievement, and employment. Some

of the results of Title IX include a decreased dropout rate among pregnant, high school females, increased opportunities in math and science for both genders, and a boost in completion of graduate and professional degrees for women (Office of Civil Rights, 1990). Though many strides have occurred through Title IX, there are still areas of employment inequity between the sexes.

Schooling and Gender Equity

There is no easy way to measure the connection between self-image and the availability or lack of availability of gender-specific role models in our schools. In schools where the teaching staff is predominantly female and the administration is predominantly male, a silent, but strong message is being sent to young people. The message is that a girl can aspire to be a teacher, while a male can aspire to be an administrator (Nieto, 1996; Sanders, 1999).

Years of research have documented unequal and too often unfriendly classroom environments for girls and for some boys (Lockheed, 1985; Sedker & Sedker, 1994). Society associates subjects such as mathematics, science, and technology with males and the arts with females. Although there is no information to support gender preferences for academic subjects, cultural biases perpetuate the belief. Also,

curriculum materials sometimes contain gender-biased language, content, and illustrations (Colby & Foote, 1995). Subtle and unintended culturally biased messages from adults create the idea among girls and boys that there are fields in which they cannot be successful because of gender (Sanders, 1999).

Due to biases associated with gender, females often have lower self-esteem than boys. Some girls believe their successes are due to luck, an unreliable factor. Boys, on the other hand, attribute their successes to ability, a reliable factor (Sanders, 1999). Females are more likely to believe that failure is due to their lack of ability, while males are likely to believe that failure is due to lack of effort (Lynch, 1990). Our culture often perpetuates the biases of the sexes and in so doing, influence the choices and aspirations young people make in education and career.

Education Attainment and Advancement

Females who select a field of study and pursue higher education to accomplish career goals achieve more advanced degrees than males (Holloway, 1998). More female teachers not only have college degrees, but advanced college degrees. Women administrators are almost twice as likely to have earned a doctorate than men. Though females

statistically have more education and usually more classroom time than males, women have difficulty moving out of teaching and into administration (Lee, 1996; Holloway, 1998).

Barriers to Advancement for Women in Educational Administration

Barriers women face in their efforts to move into educational administration are both cultural and professional. Traditionally, women receive encouragement to be wives, mothers and homemakers, while men receive encouragement to be "breadwinners." In the past, women who worked outside the home for pay usually did so to earn a living before marriage, to supplement a husbands' income, or to earn a living in the event the husband fell ill or unable to work. Being the main breadwinner is an expectation for men in American society. The idea of a man being a homemaker is generally unacceptable (Holloway, 1998).

The female's socialization to work is very different from a male's socialization to work. Traditionally, parents have communicated to women that work and careers are secondary to marriage and family. As a result, females generally have lower career aspirations than males. Peers, career advisors, and the church reinforce parent expectations for girls. Men expect to work; therefore, they generally have fewer conflicts and barriers to work than women (Mark, 1986).

An additional barrier to advancement for women is mobility. When the husband receives a transfer to another state or country, wife and family usually follow. When the wife's job requires a transfer out of town to retain employment or to career advancement, the family does not always see a move for the sake of the woman's employment as a natural condition for the family. Work as a primary motivation for professional women may conflict or be at odds with role expectations of wife and mother (Mark, 1986).

Females in Administration

Education is one of the few professions where women have historically dominated in numbers (Feldman, Jorgensen, & Poling, 1988). Women comprise 70 percent of all teachers. Administrator selections come from the teaching ranks, yet only one-third of the school principals in the U. S. are women (Holloway, 1998, Ryder, 1994).

Women superintendents represented 0.6 percent of the U. S. superintendencies in 1971 and 1.0 percent in 1980. The largest increase in numbers occurred between 1988 and 1990 when the increase jumped 2.3 percentage points (Montenegro, 1993). Today, women represent approximately 20 percent of the superintendencies in the Nation (Siegel,

1999). Gains have occurred, but women still have a long way to go to reach equity in numbers in the superintendency (Chase and Bell, 1994).

Barriers as a result of socialization, conflicting expectations, few role models, and sex-role stereotyping are barriers women face in securing employment in educational administration (Chase and Bell, 1994). Research indicates that women encounter discrimination beginning with job interviews (Edson, 1988).

School boards are still very reluctant to hire a woman administrator, particularly a woman superintendent (Ryder, 1994). Board members and search consultants are in position to influence the hiring and evaluation of applicants, yet board members and search consultants are generally men with traditional ideas of gender (Chase and Bell, 1994).

The ethical question in the representation of women in the principalship and superintendency involves the rights of females to benefit from professional and financial achievement in the education profession. Educational administration opportunities in most states, particularly the superintendency, remain a male-dominated domain (Siegel, 1999).

Conclusion

Females continue to be underrepresented in educational administration. When women are given opportunities to demonstrate competent administrative ability, schools benefit by providing equal opportunity and representation in administration for the sexes, causing both boys and girls to recognize that school administration is not gender specific. Yet, many females never receive the opportunity to demonstrate skill and competence in school administration due to the traditional stereotypical roles for the sexes.

Today, females are likely to be main breadwinners and often the sole support for the family. It is unethical to deny women opportunity in educational administration. The ethical question is how to increase female representation in administration when males with traditional ideas of gender-specific roles continue to control the gateway to advancement by holding the majority representation on school boards and superintendencies.

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